

*M<sup>o</sup> Kown (J. M.)*

THE  
TEMPERANCE QUESTION  
FROM THE  
STAND-POINT  $\approx$  THE PRESENT.

DELIVERED BY  
JOHN MORGAN M'KOWN, M. D.,  
OF ARCOLA, ILL.

SEMI-ANNUAL ADDRESS  
Of the Æsculapian Society of the Wabash Valley,  
AT MARSHALL, ILL., MAY 27, 1874.

*Box*



CHARLESTON, ILL.:  
PRINTED AT THE COURIER BOOK AND JOB OFFICE,  
1874.





# THE TEMPERANCE QUESTION

## FROM THE STAND-POINT OF THE PRESENT,

DELIVERED BY

JOHN MORGAN McKOWN, M. D.,

OF ARCOLA, ILL.,

AT MARSHALL, ILL., MAY 27th, 1874.

---

*Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen:*—The difficulty of carrying water upon both shoulders at once is so apparent, and has met with such general recognition, as to have passed into an adage. When we wish mildly to express our judgment that a particular person, as respects his public life, is at once a supreme fool and a complete failure, we say, he is trying to carry water on both shoulders. The difficulty of delivering an acceptable public address to an audience representing both the scientific and commercial phases of life, is scarcely less onerous, I imagine, though happily free from the odium which attaches to the double-shoulder water-carrier. Standing before you to-night, as the representative, in some sense, of the *Æsculapian Society*, of the Wabash Valley, presumably a learned and scientific body, and especially so with respect to a particular department of scientific research, about which there is a most lamentable ignorance, even among educated people—metaphorically carrying the *Æsculapian Society* upon one shoulder, and yet, in point of fact, desiring to address myself more particularly to an audience representing entirely different phases of thought and life, and who, from the very condition of their mental constitutions and educational training, would naturally perch upon the other shoulder—you can appreciate the difficulty of so arranging the load as to allow a common ground upon which all may be mutually entertained and mutually benefited. I have sought to solve this problem by the easiest method. In attempting to adjust this load to my shoulders for the hour in which I shall stand before you, I have had very little regard for the comfort, the edification, or even the safety of my professional brethren. I warn them against the idleness of the hope that, in the effort to which their kindness has called me, I shall make any attempt to lead them into the green pastures or



beside the still waters of professional lore or scientific discussion. I seek a more plainly beaten path, a commoner, if a homelier, ground. And if the ruggedness of the journey or the homeliness of the way should perchance jostle one of these learned gentlemen from his scientific altitude and professional serenity, even disfiguring bruises may become honorable scars, if they fill his heart with some kindly sympathy for the broken bones and cracked crowns of other people. I commend to him, should he fall, the same physic with which, if he does not cure, he at least terrifies and appalls mankind. And now, having fairly warned my professional brethren of the nature of the entertainment to which I invite them, allowing them the fullest liberty to descend with us into the valley of a commonplace subject, (if I may be allowed such an expression,) and to a practical discussion of it, or to linger behind on their own serene and philosophic heights, as they list, I turn myself squarely face to face with you.

And what shall I talk to you about? I had it in my mind to attempt the refutation of some popular fallacies which obtain against the healing art, and the ventilation also of some popular absurdities as respects the physical organism and its physiological functions, which people have imbibed, just as they sometimes catch the itch, from unfortunate associations in life. But since I have been invited to deliver this address, public attention has been directed so prominently to a question of most vital importance, and one which legitimately falls within the range of a physician's necessary investigation, that I have concluded to run the risk of boring you by the introduction of what is usually regarded as a hackneyed theme. I propose to call your attention to the great question of temperance reform which is now agitating the country; not so much for the purpose of discussing any particular phase of the reform movement itself, but as making it the basis of what I desire to say upon the general question of temperance. And I claim your indulgence for the introduction of a subject which you may consider as having already been fully examined and discussed.

Now, that the evils of intemperance have been, to a great extent, the stock in trade of the public lecturers of the country for the last thirty years; that through all changes, through many vicissitudes, first to crowded houses, while the subject was new, and afterward to empty benches, they have sounded all the variations of the drunkard's woe and the drunkard's doom, until the public had come to regard the remedy nearly as great a nuisance as was the disease—this may be undeniably true, and might reasonably deter me from the introduction of such a subject here; yet it is none the less a fact that the great evil of intemperance still remains a terrible presence in our land, and that to-day it is demanding at our hands some practicable solution. It will not suffice that, looking with complacency upon our individual and personal rectitude of life and walk, we say to this evil, we are weary of you, and you have become an offense unto us, any more than it sufficed the unfortunate citizen of Shreveport, last autumn, to say to the terrible plague which was rioting in his city, I am weary of you, and you are an abomination

unto me. That dread plague crept on and on until its dark shadow fell athwart his threshold, and its gloom enveloped his home; and think you that its loathsome embrace was not all the more appalling on account of fancied security? True it is that he had killed no cattle in all the plain or by the river's side, and that in no official and legal sense was he the custodian of the city's health; yet "the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and the destruction which wasteth at noonday," came to his door and laid upon him its withering touch. It seems to be a universal law, growing out of the very conditions of our humanity, an outgrowth of our organization into communities and commonwealths, that, to some extent, public evils, as well as public blessings, affect every individual citizen of the community. It seems to be the great common law, underlying that still greater and higher law of our mutual need. We can not disregard it. I am not authorized to say that there will be any exception whatever made in your favor. You may sit before me to-night in all the complacent security which the consciousness of a pure life may give to you, and it is a glorious thing to feel the consciousness of pure living; you may even go a step beyond this and thank God that you are not as other men are, and especially as is the poor, miserable drunkard; but remember, my dear friend, that a great evil—rather let me say, a great plague—overshadows the land, and that no condition of life, either as respects the life walk of the individual or his surroundings, can purchase absolute immunity from the baneful effects of this dreadful scourge. It may not affect you in your person, it is true, for the seeds of drunkenness are rarely ever sown after thirty-five years of age; but perchance, O, perchance, in striking down your son, upon whose head had gathered all the hopes of your ripening years, may it not take from life its glory and wound more deeply than if you yourself had fallen? It is the fact of the presence of this terrible evil in the land, and utter the impossibility of our escaping individual responsibility for, and individual contact with, and individual interest in this evil, that must be my excuse for asking you to look at it with me a little while this evening.

And I disclaim, in the outset, any intention of discussing the moral aspect of the temperance question. I am willing to take for granted that the moral or the immoral aspect of the temperance question has been definitely settled in your own minds long ago. It has in mine; and while I am not here, I trust, to throw stones at anybody, or to call a man a vagabond because he unfortunately chances to be a drunkard; while I abhor, as much as any one can abhor, that style of purification which consists in throwing mud on other people, and have great contempt for that religion which calmly appropriates the crown of an angel because it happens to be minus the actual hoof of the devil; yet my convictions are so decided, and so changeless also, I apprehend, upon this subject, that I trust I shall never give forth any uncertain utterances as to my belief in the great evil of intemperance. But it is for each of you, in your individual capacity, according to the light you have, to judge of this question as seemeth right in your sight. It is, the



greatness as well as the glory of the age and of the land in which we live, that thought is unfettered, and that questions affecting individual destiny are left to the free and equitable solution of individual action. Should a man even become so strangely infatuated as to put aside the grand prerogative with which God has invested all men—the right to walk erect in the light of heaven, with unclouded faculty and undimmed vision; should he, in the madness of some unguarded moment, put aside all that is most glorious in his humanity, to lie down with the beasts that perish, I would not so much deny his right to do it, as I would deplore and mourn over his choice. It may seem that such an assertion would give license to unrestrained indulgence, and preclude prohibitory restrictions. It does not. Man sustains a dual relation. First, to himself; and second, to the community. Those acts of his life which affect only his individual and personal being are entirely beyond the jurisdiction of anybody else, and it is for him alone to elect or to reject as to a particular line of conduct; but when his acts affect me as an individual member of the community toward whom he sustains reciprocal relations, and when they affect the community at large toward which he also sustains reciprocal relations, it is perfectly competent for us to inquire whether those acts affect us injuriously or not, and whether, within reasonable limits, we shall not protect ourselves from the influence of such acts. Liberty does not mean license, and can not be perverted to mean it. It comprehends mutual obligations, and reciprocal forbearance and toleration. If it is an inalienable right which belongs to every man to get drunk, it is none the less an inalienable right which belongs to every other man to protect himself, if he can, against the annoyances of that debauchery. And when by universal consent, therefore, a course of conduct comes to be regarded as an evil and a crime, government throws around the innocent the safeguards of law, by attaching penalties to such courses of conduct. But I do not desire to pursue this collateral point any further at this stage of the inquiry. I may possibly have occasion to introduce the principle later in discussing the means to be employed for the suppression of this great evil.

Let me repeat my opening declaration, that into the moral aspect of the temperance question I have no design of entering; you must decide that without argument from me. And before coming to the general question of intemperance, I desire to take up the temperance crusade, not simply as a movement of great public interest, but as one of actual fact; to discuss it as a *fact*, without going into the right or wrong, either of the movement itself, or the causes which produced it. These might be very interesting points of inquiry, but I think it unwise to burden this address by taking them up. The fact which mostly interests us is the fact of the movement itself, as developed in the last five months, and which has assumed such proportions as almost to invest it with a national significance. And now, in directing your thought to it, I do not desire to be understood as introducing this wonderful crusade movement for the purpose of advocating it as a practicable solution for the evils of intemperance. I disclaim any such purpose. I believe the

whole temperance crusade to be entirely insufficient in itself to overthrow the demon of intemperance which, like a strong man, has spoiled the goods and possessed the souls of so many men in this land. Nor, on the other hand, do I desire to be understood as introducing it, only that I might condemn it. I have no word of condemnation for those who, under the movings of a great personal injury to themselves, or the inspiration of a great wrong to others, throw their visible bodies into the breach which a hellish agent is daily making. He who has aught but the kindest sympathy for these brave women, is himself a retainer of the Prince of the power of the air and a follower of that dark banner which brings only desolation where it waves. But it is not my habit to be carried with the popular current, however strong and swift that current may be, and however easily I might ride upon its crest. It is an inherent right which belongs to me as an individual, to question the efficacy of means when in my judgment they are inadequate to the end designed; and when those means fail, it is an imperative duty which rests upon me, as a physician, to investigate, and, so far as I may be able, to proclaim the causes of that failure, if it involves injury to my kind. If I believe the crusade temperance movement, so far as the immediate abolition of dram selling and dram drinking is concerned, to be substantially a failure, it would certainly be the part of wisdom in me, as a sincere friend to a genuine temperance reformation, to investigate the causes of that failure, rather than deny the fact of the failure itself. It has been said, by a distinguished son of South Carolina, that no man ever retrieved a fallen fortune until he thoroughly recognized the fact that he was poor. It may be said, with equal truth, that no great reformer has ever revolutionized the world until he correctly apprehended the causes of his first failures. The causes of the failure of the crusade movement are fraught with wonderful interest, since they underlie, as so many determining factors, the great fact of intemperance itself. But before passing to their consideration, I desire to say a word about the movement itself.

This temperance crusade is a most marvelous exhibition, whether we regard it as a success or a failure. It is the most wonderful outcropping of an underlying and wide-spread public sentiment against the tyranny of a great curse that this age has ever witnessed. As such, it is very significant. Robert Collyer says, that the great revivals of religion which have occurred this winter are the result of the panic; that when people are shut off from the good things of the world which now is, they naturally seek the consolations of that one which is to come. I do not quote his language, but that is the sense. If that were true, it would seem to place the Almighty under the necessity of occasionally getting up an embargo on legitimate prosperity, in order to fill up the ranks of His spiritual kingdom on earth; and such interferences in mundane affairs, so far as they availed to rope men into the kingdom, whether willing or not, I suppose, would be accepted by Prof. Patton and our "true blue" Presbyterian friends as in the line of a correct theology, even if taught by so notorious a heretic as Robert Coll-



yer. Such an assumption would relieve the Republican party of a fearful responsibility, though it would not be particularly complimentary to the financial policy of the great ruler of the universe. But in whatever light we may be disposed to regard Mr. Collyer's views as to the determining cause of religious awakenings, (and I leave the settlement of that question to those who are more familiar with what was projected in the counsels of eternity, than I am,) it could hardly be expected that we should be asked to make a general application of the principle. Any attempt, therefore, to explain the great crusade movement upon any such hypothesis, I at once pronounce entirely heretical. And I mean by heresy, Mr. Collyer's own definition of that term; that is, that he happens to differ from me in opinion; a definition which is enthusiastically endorsed by that eminent theologian, Mr. Robert G. Ingersol.

Whence then the crusade movement? I can only repeat, that I regard it as an extraordinary manifestation of a wide-spread and thoroughly earnest public sentiment against the longer continuance of a great curse. And yet it was much more. In one sense it was the piteous cry of helpless women. It was the piteous cry of women who had long been burdened, and some of whom had long been sitting in the shadow of a gloom more appalling than any physical darkness which ever rested upon this earth; to whom there came no ray of light or hope, no promise of a dawn; only unrest and bitterness and anguish and hopelessness, until they should lay them down in the sweet forgetfulness of that long, long sleep which comes at last, thank God, to all the weary ones of earth. And shall that cry touch no kindly chord of sympathy in your heart, or in mine? Shall we sit idly by? And though measurably a failure, so far as immediate practical results are concerned, the movement should have much of hope when rightly interpreted. It may not, indeed, have felled that foul and poisonous tree which grows so rank and strong in this land, but it surely has severed some feeding roots, and lopped off some unsightly branches. And there must needs be failures. The histories of great reformations are not written in the songs of an unbroken triumph. Failure mars every page. The moral sentiment of mankind has to be educated and trained before it will embrace good and reject evil. The power of great systems, steadily growing for years, until they reach and touch every relation in life, is not to be broken in a day. We have had in our own history a remarkable illustration of this. John Brown's raid was said, by unthinking people, to have been the cause of the late war. Nothing could be further from the truth. It was merely a surface wave, showing in what direction ocean's vast volume of water was rolling. I remember that, as a stripling, with burnished rifle, and in brilliant uniform, I stood sentinel beside the banks of the silvery Potomac, ready to meet the invading hosts that never came. For weeks the mournful farce went on; for weeks we marched and counter-marched over the verdant hills of that far-famed and matchless valley of the Shenandoah, while the offended majesty of violated law was being vindicated up at Charlestown, by choking the breath from old Ossawattamie. At last the Southern



heart was supposed to be sufficiently fired, and the melo-drama closed. But the soul of old John Brown went marching on, a voiceless, but irresistible presence among the hosts who were battling for human freedom; and that fire, kindled there with such amazing patience and thoroughness, never went out until it had burned every manacle from the slave. So in the great temperance movement of to-day. The unbridled license of a drunken mob, in Chicago or Dayton, may triumph for the hour in crushing some helpless woman; but day by day there is being educated in this country a public sentiment which shall drive these ruffians to the wall, and wrest from their grasp the power they only wield in order to curse. And as, in the one case, we waited and watched for the dawn of a day which should bring liberty, in its largest sense, to those who sat in the chains of a degrading servitude, so, in the other, we wait and labor for the dawn of that day when reason shall be loosed from her galling chains and men shall walk the earth free.

In the meantime, let us gather, if we can, some lesson from the crusade movement, pick up some grain of comfort even from its failure. And what were the causes of its failure? It invoked the help of Almighty God in its mission, relied, in fact, upon that aid chiefly, and why, therefore, fail?

It has been asserted that it was an attempt to solve an altogether insolvable problem. But the truth is, that it was an attempt to work out a problem, exceedingly difficult under the most favorable phase, by an altogether impracticable method. It was like an attempt to stay the swift rush of an Alpine avalanche by scattering spruce and fern in its track. Now, the causes which led to the failure of the movement, are proximate and remote; they touch upon the immediate agencies which were invoked, and which were supposed would be effectual; they touch upon the evil itself as it exists, and they go infinitely deeper in their remoter aspect, comprehending the vital and physical conditions which determine the existence of intemperance itself.

Let us examine first, for a moment, the soldiery who waged this aggressive war against King Alcohol, and the nature of the force by which they sought to overthrow his strongholds. In the first place, they were a band of helpless women without effective strength in themselves; appealing most powerfully, it is true, by that very weakness, to our sympathy; but utterly unable in themselves to break the power of a long-established system. For unfortunately debauchery is legalized in this country, and the sale of the most destructive of all agents is a perfectly legitimate traffic. Against this most iniquitous, yet most tremendous system, they went forth, not with carnal weapons, but with the voice of supplication, hoping to make saints out of men who heretofore had not even been decent sinners. I have a profound and an abiding faith in the power of prayer when rightly used. I believe it to be, in a very important sense, the most effective weapon with which we may combat evil; but I am an utter disbeliever in its efficiency permanently to close dram shops, or to make genuine Good Templars

out of saloon keepers, when the intercession goes up from outside parties. The notorious Van Pelt was exhibited to admiring crowds as a thoroughly revolutionized individual, a little more "simon-pure" even than the good, old fashioned teetotaler who had never drank anything stronger than water from his youth up; but it seems the bottom has fallen out of Van, and, like the sow which was washed, he has returned to his wallowing. If these men whose coffers represent the groans of unhappy women and the rags of squalid children, would make restitution, free and ample, then fall on their marrow bones and cry aloud to God in their own behalf, I should be prepared to witness a happier result. But you might as well sing psalms to Balaam's ass, as to pray for a man who ordinarily makes thirteen cents out of a glass of whisky. The day of visible miracles, in my apprehension, has passed. Whether we pray on the house tops or in the closet, God will hardly revolutionize the whole stratum of society in a single night, I take it, in order that we may twit our neighbors with superior piety and intercessory power at a Throne of Grace. He does not work in that way. To teach some needed lesson of humility to the stiff-necked Israelites, as well as to strike terror to the hearts of unbelievers, it may have been necessary that the walls of Jericho should fall down at the blowing of horns and the swinging of lamps; but we live neither at Jericho, nor yet at Jerusalem, and the average saloon keeper of the present day would stand a pretty stiff blast of chin music, even if Gabriel himself should lead the band.

And then some of these women who went forth to lift up holy hands, I am afraid, had not the devout habit of praying at home. I have no word of censure, understand me, for the sincere, earnest woman who, under in the conviction of duty, went out to plead with God that erring men might be brought to the power of a better life. It is the miserable sham I detest. It was only the other day that a distinguished member of this society wrote me that some of the prominent crusade women of his city employed intemperate physicians, and that, in bad cases even, they would wait a day or two for them to sober up. Imagine, if you can, what a tremendous stir an appeal for sobriety, coming from such a quarter, would create in the court of heaven, and how business would come to a standstill, while innumerable messengers were being dispatched to attend to the request of the pious sister! Verily, had the redoubtable band of priests who went forth at break of day to encompass the walls of Jericho, numbered in their train one of these sisters, it is my honest belief those walls would have stood until this day, and possibly for all time, unless blown down by a western hurricane. Why, had every woman in the crusade army, been possessed of that faith which removes mountains, the annihilation of the liquor traffic of this country, by such means, would have been the most wonderful miracle ever performed on the face of the earth. Just think of it. Here is a traffic involving tremendous monetary interests; absolutely working more actual capital than is invested in all the bread-stuffs, boots and shoes, the clothing, and the books and periodicals of the country; realizing enormous profits; con-



trolled by formidable and thoroughly unscrupulous organizations; wielding the brute force of the largest and most reckless army of hummers that ever cursed God's footstool, and dragging in its lurid wake its tens of thousands of human victims—to expect this monstrous organization quietly to give up place and power, and become decent and reputable, is to expect an impossibility. It will never do it so long as malice can invent a defense or malignity strike a blow.

Is there, then, no escape? Must this terrible power forever sit like a fearful incubus upon this fair land? Must we forever be saddened by the sight and awed by the power and tormented by the flames of this veritable hell, into which our friends are constantly falling? Is there never to come a day when this awful pit shall be closed?

My friends, these are grave and serious problems. They are pressing themselves home upon our notice in this land to-day in such a way that we can not evade their significance. If we do not master this great evil, it threatens to master us. We can no more fly from it than could Christian, in Bunyan's immortal allegory, fly from Apollyon whom he met in the valley of humiliation. It would be the sheerest presumption in me to intimate that I had found the key which shall lock up this horrible monster. Nothing less than that far-seeing vision which shall comprehend this great question in all its relations—which shall solve, in fact, the problem why man alone, of all the created orders, is an intemperate animal—shall be able so much as even to give us the clew which shall lead us from this gloomy labyrinth in which for nearly six thousand years the human race has wandered. But surely I may stand modestly on the bank and drop my humble offering into that endless stream of human wisdom and human folly which we call practical discussion and “looking at things” in this country.

Now, I have already intimated that the principal cause of the failure of the crusade, in its remoter aspect, I may say, indeed, in its essential nature, touches the very bottom of intemperance itself, abstractly considered. That is, that an evil which has been gathering strength and volume for centuries, whose influence reaches out until it embraces, either directly or indirectly, nearly the entire mass of mankind, can only be successfully combated by those means which, while comprehending its entire nature, shall be commensurate with the resistance to be overcome. Will any one have the hardihood to believe that isolated bands of helpless women, by the mere singing of psalms and the praying of prayers, could, in a day, violently up-root and tear out what is almost an ineradicable propensity in human nature? The largest stretches of faith could scarcely compass such a belief.

Let us look at the facts. Man is an intemperate animal. He is much more—he is a drunken animal. He has been guzzling for nearly six thousand years. The pages of all history, sacred and profane, bring to our eyes only the sad vision of human weakness and human folly. Noah got on a famous or an infamous debauch in his garden, so that his own sons whom he had saved from the

great flood of waters were heartily ashamed of him; and there were not wanting other ancient worthies to whom a second glass had an irresistible attraction. Even Solomon, who compares very favorably with any philosopher the world has ever produced, doubtless spoke from the depths of his own painful experience when he warned against the wine when it is red. From the time the Hebrews passed from under the rule of the judges, it was nip and tug whether the licentiousness or the drunkenness of that nation should reach the goal. And they were perfectly abstemious in comparison with their neighbors. And then coming to profane history, we find that Alexander's stupid performance has been a perfect godsend to temperance lecturers ever since the dark ages. Men have stood up and hopefully told that yarn to old soaks who could have drank enough benzine to float the entire Alexander family and then would only have been comfortably drunk. And after the story had been told in the most pathetic manner, with all the dramatic effect with which John B. Gough could invest such a story, and I am told that his coat tail is more eloquent than the mouths of a great many men, how refreshing to the moral sense to see one old soak leer over to his neighbor soak, and chuckle out—"I say, Bill, do you know anything of this 'ere cove Alexander? he must have been a great flat." It is, to my apprehension, one of the grandest mistakes of the temperance efforts of this age, that they have expended their strength on men to whom intemperance has become an incurable disease. You could with one of Dr. Prince's batteries galvanize corpses into clog dancers as easily as you could reconstruct men who are candidates for spontaneous combustion, and who, if they escape such a fate, will be debtors to the fact that the whisky with which they are soaked is so very mean that it won't burn. And I may notice, in passing, that the legislature which framed the license law of this state, going into operation in July, has made the same blunder. It forbids the sale of liquor to men who are in the habit of getting drunk, while it throws wide the doors of intemperance to the great mass of young men with whom the habit is not yet formed. There is something radically defective in such legislation, for, instead of abridging, it only perpetuates, the evil whose power it is designed to render nugatory.

We find, then, that intemperance is a general vice, world-wide, peculiar to no nationality, and sparing no age, sex, or condition of life. Nine-tenths of the human family use stimulants in some shape or form. They do not all drink whisky fortunately. The Turk takes his opium while surrounded by the houries of an enchanted seraglio; the Egyptian, his lotus as he dreams of the departed glory of his fatherland; the German, his beer while puzzling his brain over the metaphysical problems of Strauss; the Frenchman, his wine or absinthe while he intrigues for new dynasties; the Englishman, his ale while he wonders if Princes Royal are always to be cockneys; the Irishman, his poteen while he makes merry at his grand mother's wake; the Scotch presbyterian, his whisky straight while he is hunting down heretics; and the average American, while expounding the constitution and turning up his



republican nose at the effete monarchies of Europe, recklessly drinks down a villainous compound which defies all classification, which, while having none of the virtues, manages to unite the destructive animus of all the rest. In a word, we find that there are the fewest number of strictly temperate people. Some of the most ardent temperance women in the country, I venture to assert, are perfect prodigies at tea drinking, while a fair sprinkling of the eminent divines who pray with such unction for the cessation of intemperance use enough tobacco in a month to kill an army of rats. Why is this? Why this extraordinary consumption of stimulants by that extraordinary biped, man?

This is a very important psychological question aside from the general interest which attaches to it as determining in some sense man's moral and physical status. It uncovers, however, to our vision so vast a field of inquiry that I can hardly hope to do more than reach through the fence after some fragments of truth as we pass along. I know you will be relieved to learn that I have no intention of climbing over. We might wander in it for a life-time and yet leave many recesses unexplored.

Why, then, do men drink? The excuses which they parade are of the most extraordinary character, and the subterfuges by which they seek to reconcile "bitters" with the laws of health are perfect models of ingenuity, and would have gained them distinction as special plunders in any court of justice in the land. If you were to ask your right-hand neighbor why he indulges in a little "bourbon," he would probably tell you that it is in obedience to St. Paul's admonition to Timothy to take a little wine for the stomach's sake, as if that severe old ascetic, the flesh-mortifying Paul, would have given his official endorsement to the modern tangle-foot, a barrel of which contains a very fair-sized lead mine, with a pretty abundant outcropping of strychnia, strontia, potash, logwood, and red pepper. And as an open confession is said to be good for the soul, he who speaks to you to-night feels constrained to state that, acting under the advice of a distinguished member of this society, and very agreeably to himself, he tried to get a corner on chills by taking two drinks of whisky a day—one at 9 a. m., and the other at 4 p. m. Sure enough the corner was turned after awhile, but unfortunately he was the individual cornered, though he trusts not "corned." He became completely disgusted, abandoned such practice as entirely irrational, if not empirical, and fell back on those mild and pleasant agents, quinine and arsenic, the effects of which you who look upon him to-night are to be the judges. We find that there is no conceivable subterfuge to which men have not resorted and which they will not practice in order to cover a little quiet drinking with the garb of expediency or decency. They will swallow a mixture revolting enough to vomit a skunk, if the basis of it be alcohol. They pour it down red-hot, and flavored with ginger, to warm up their frozen bodies, and the next hour take it diluted, with lemon farewell, to cool them off. They take a pretty stiff glass before breakfast to give them an appetite, and immediately afterward one to bind down what they have eaten and to cook

any raw victuals which Bridget may have found too tough for the fire. I have known rugged men in locust years to get beastly drunk on hot summer afternoons in order, as they innocently told their wives, to steal a march on those interesting little insects which orthodox people would have us believe are one of the legacies of Pharaoh to an admiring posterity. But you know how it is yourself.

Why, then, this universal demand for stimulants?

As I have already observed, this is a broad field of inquiry, without limits scarcely, and can only of course receive a passing notice.

I may make one general statement as covering the entire ground of my belief as respects this question; a belief to which I have insensibly come by observation and reflection; and that is, that man has become an intemperate animal in virtue of the force of education, through the power of temptation, and by direct transmission, rather than in obedience to any natural bias which resided in him originally. I am willing to concede, and do concede, that man has within him enough of innate, undiluted, natural depravity, inherited probably from Adam, but any way existing as a fact, to make him take very kindly to a little of the Oh-be-joyful, especially if offered in the shape of mint juleps. But in the beginning God made men pure and upright without this thirst. Men are educated to drink just as they are educated to read. One-half of the children in the country are nursed on Mrs. "Winslow's Soothing Syrup" and "Bateman's Drops," which are simply a villainous compound of poppy leaves, opium, and inferior alcohol. Swarms of the human race first see the light of day in the filth of reeking courts and purlieus; their young cheeks are scorched by the hot breath of drunkards, and their first playmates are the gamins and *canaille* of great cities. Is it wonderful that, passing the boundaries of childhood in spite of such untoward surroundings, they themselves grow up rank and noxious weeds, intensifying the poisonous atmosphere in which they grow? A drunken father usually begets a drunken son. A very considerable portion of the race are born into the world with a constitutional bias for strong drink which they can no more shake off than they can shake off a syphilitic taint. If there is one man, who above all other men perhaps on this broad earth, deserves our sympathy, it is the constitutional drunkard. A man like the brilliant Yates, for example, who could no more resist the power of this terrible appetite than he could suspend the action of his heart.

It was only a few weeks ago that I grasped the hand of a man probably known to you all; a successful journalist; a man once of brilliant promise; and he told me with deep feeling that he thought he had conquered the arch-enemy of his life. In less than sixty hours that arch-enemy had conquered him, and his spirit was free from the curse which laid his body in a suicide's grave. And in every way, by the force of education, through the power of temptation and by hereditary transmission, men are thronging into that broad road whose end lies amidst the dark shadows of the charnel-house. They imbibe the taste in their very childhood with the



sugar they suck from a father's occasional glass of toddy, only to drink at last its terrible dregs in a drunkard's grave. Liquors are so manipulated in fancy drinks that they tempt the palate as the first step, and men drink them for the same reason that they eat strawberries and cream. An illustration of this, and I pass from the general consideration of this part of the subject.

A traveler from Virginia, passing through the valleys of Arkansas, stopped at a tavern to rest and refresh himself. He found that the landlord, a good, jolly fellow, was in the habit of taking his whisky straight. The Virginian proposed a mint julep, and forthwith proceeded to induct the benighted back-woodsman into the mysteries of that Virginia staple. They drank. They enjoyed much. The traveler held his course. Time passed on. The lights and shadows of another year had added its measure to the joy or gloom of that secluded valley, when, in the gloaming of a summer twilight, the Virginian again drew rein before that tavern door. "Halloo, Pompey, where is your master?" "He's done dead, sah, last week, sarvent, sah?" "Dead! Is it possible? What was the trouble with him?" "Sarvent, sah? A man from old Virginnny came along here about a year ago and learned Massa how to drink grass in he whisky, and he jist clean gone and busted himself, sah; and dis nigger's free, hi! hi!"

Passing on we find that there are not wanting a vast number of secondary causes which conspire to perpetuate the vice of intemperance by giving to the use of alcohol the sanction of recognized authority. I have only time to notice one of these. I approach it, I trust, in the spirit of true inquiry, and not with reproach upon my lips. I would willingly remain silent upon it, if my sense of duty did not compel me to speak. It is a painful confession to me when I declare my conviction that the teaching of the medical profession of this country upon the use of stimulants is pernicious in its tendency. I do not assert, and I would not pretend to assert, that the medicinal administration of alcohol is hurtful in itself, that it may not even, in certain cases, be indispensable; but I do conceive that its general and indiscriminate use by the profession and the laudations which are being constantly bestowed upon it are most hurtful and pernicious in their tendencies. And now, if you will bear with me a few moments, I would like to speak more particularly to my professional brethren on this subject. They doubtless have grown pretty restive under all this talk about matters to whose level it is not probable they often descend; and a "sop to Cerberus" may prove not to be without its mollifying influence here as well as among the ancients.

It was only the other day that an article reached my table from the pen of an eminent neurologist who, in the opinion of his friends, has satisfactorily concluded the investigation of nervous phenomena. I refer to Prof. Wm. A. Hammond, once Surgeon General of the U. S. Army, and who, while filling that high position, happily succeeded in throwing around his memory a fragrance which still floats in undiminished essence over this Mississippi valley. I refer to that master-stroke of therapeutic tactics, the cut-

ting off of Calomel and Tartar-emetic from the supply table; by which brilliant *Coup d'etat* he virtually retired seven-eighths of the army surgeons from the active practice of their profession. I have here fortunately no private ax to grind, since I studied medicine long after the war had closed, and only refer to the circumstance in this connection that the brethren may have no misapprehension as to whom I shall quote presently.

Prof. Hammond, it seems, has recently instituted a series of experiments, the results of which he has submitted to the New York Neurological Society, with the view to determine the "value of alcohol as an aliment, or as a substitute for aliment." The experiments were performed on himself and on dogs. The limits of this address will not allow me to give them entire. I do not know that I could bring them before you better than to quote from the address itself. Prof. Hammond says they consist of three series:

"First. The influence of alcohol when the food was just sufficient for the wants of the organism.

Second. When it was not sufficient.

Third. When it was more than sufficient.

Four drachms of alcohol diluted with an equal quantity of water were taken at each meal. During the first series, when the food was of such a character and quantity as to maintain the weight of the body at its normal standard, I found, as the result of experiments continued for five days, during which time sixty drachms of alcohol had been taken, that the weight of the body had increased from 226.40 lbs. to 226.85 lbs., a difference of .45 lbs. In the same period the amount of carbonic acid and aqueous vapour exhaled from the lungs, had undergone diminution, as had likewise the quantity of urine and its solid constituents.

While these experiments lasted my general health was somewhat disturbed, my pulse was increased to an average of 90 per minute, and was fuller and stronger than usual, and there was an indisposition to exertion of any kind.

The inference to be drawn from those experiments certainly is, that when the system is supplied with an abundance of food, and when there are no special circumstances existing which render the use of alcohol advisable, its employment as a beverage is not to be commended. But there are two facts which can not be set aside, and these are the body gained in weight and the excretions were diminished. These phenomena were doubtless owing to the following causes: First, the retardation of the decay of the tissues. Second, the diminution in the consumption of the fat of the body. And third, the increase of the assimilative powers of the system by which the food was more completely appropriated and applied to the formation of tissue."

So much for experiments, omitting the second and third series. His conclusion as to the physiological action is contained in the following words:

"Alcohol retards the destruction of the tissues. By this destruction force is generated, muscles contracted, thoughts are developed, organs secrete and excrete. Food supplies the material for new



tissue. Now, as alcohol stops the full tide of this decay, it is very evident that it must furnish the force which is developed under its use. How it does this is not clear. But it is not clear how a piece of iron deflects a magnetic needle when held on the opposite side of a stone wall or feather bed. Both circumstances are ultimate facts, which for the present at least must satisfy us."

But it seems they did not satisfy him, for in a few sentences further on he gives what he regards as the physiological explanation of this force.

"It is not at all improbable," says Prof. Hammond, "that alcohol itself furnishes the force directly, by entering into combination with the first products of tissue decay, whereby they are again assimilated without being excreted as urea, uric acid, &c. Upon this hypothesis, and upon this alone, so far as I can perceive, can be reconciled the fact that an increase of force and a diminution of the products of decay of tissue attend upon the ingestion of alcohol."

So much for experiments, and the explanation which Prof. Hammond offers as the physiological action of alcohol. We now come to his therapeutics. He discusses incidentally in connection with this part of the subject the question of excess in the use of stimulants, and holds that every man in that respect is a law unto himself; that a glass of wine may be excess in some persons. He then says: "That alcohol even in large quantities is beneficial to some persons, is a point in regard to which I have no doubt; but those persons are not in a normal condition, and when they are restored to health their potations should cease. I have seen many a weak, hysterical woman drink a pint of whisky or brandy a day without experiencing the least intoxicating effects, or even feeling excited by it. The exhausted tissue has seemed to absorb it as though it were the one thing craved, and recovery has been rapid under the use when all other means have failed. I have seen strong men struck down with pneumonia and fever, and apparently saved from the grave by brandy or other alcoholic liquors. I have prevented epileptic seizures by its moderate use. Neuralgic attacks are often cut short by it, and sometimes entirely prevented. It has been efficacious in catalepsy, and in tetanus; it is one of the best antidotes to the bites of poisonous serpents, as I have repeatedly witnessed; in the convulsions of teething children and other sources of reflex irritation it is invaluable; in the spinal irritation to which women, and especially American women, are so subject, nothing takes its place, and in certain forms of gastric dyspepsia it must be given if we wish to cure our patients."

I have tried not to garble this lecture of Prof. Hammond's. My time will not allow me, it is true, to give as full extracts from it as I should wish; but I have tried to quote at sufficient length to make his meaning apparent. I am not disposed to quarrel with Prof. Hammond's physiology, but I regard his therapeutics as wretchedly bad. I am willing to grant all he says about the perturbing influence of alcohol on the human system in conditions of health; but whether it will cure hysterical women or sub-acute

gastritis I very much doubt. It may be remembered that I read a paper before this society a year or two ago in which I sought to explain the physiological action of alcohol in retarding waste of tissue and diminishing the excretion of nitrogenous compounds, as urea, uric acid, &c. The secretary of this society, in a recent letter received from him, was of the opinion that I would have to revise that article before I made a temperance address. Nothing of the kind is at all necessary. I wrote that article as an attempted explanation of a recognized fact; and that fact was the same one precisely that Prof. Hammond brings out in the lecture from which I have quoted—namely, that alcohol has the power of taking the place of food, or at least of so influencing the oxygenating processes going forward in the tissues as to supplement it.

I attempted to explain this action upon the following proposition:

“Alcohol possesses, in a remarkable degree, the property of preserving animal tissues when such tissues are immersed in it. We call this known property of alcohol into requisition in every pathological or anatomical preparation which we make for our museums. Might not this same property of alcohol be invoked in explanation of its action in the living organism, in preserving the tissues, that we concede it exerts mechanically over tissues with which it is brought into contact without the body; that it prevents waste in the living organism by restraining oxygenation; and that this result is affected, not so much in virtue of any absolute restraining power of which it is possessed, *per se*, but rather by an immediate impression which it exercises over the tissues in the organism with which it is brought into contact—by its antiseptic, or, more properly, its preservative properties. In a word, that its action within the organism is identical, in nature at least, to what it is without.”

I pass by entirely my argument upon this proposition. Now what were my therapeutics? Let me quote from the paper itself.

“I will say, in brief, that there are three principal indications for its employment.

First. When supporting measures are urgently demanded.

Second. When food can not be appropriated.

Third. In severe nervous prostration or collapse.”

It will be observed that there is a considerable discrepancy between this summary and the therapeutic indications adduced by Prof. Hammond. Prof. Hammond says that food supplies the material for new tissue. No one will question that fact. But the result of such supply to the organism is a process resembling combustion, a process, at least, of oxygenation, in which there is a disintegration of tissue, and consequent elimination, by the various emunctories of the body, of deleterious products. It will be granted at once that food is an essential need of the organism, and that those processes which follow its introduction into the body are altogether physiological processes, and just as essential in character as the want of food itself. But, that alcohol suspends the process of oxygenation, is abundantly proven by the diminished

excretions which follow its use, and so far as that act of suspension extends, it is certainly an abnormal departure from a physiological state. What is the legitimate inference? Why, that alcohol is only indicated under those circumstances in which there is an actual failure of food, or when food can not be assimilated. Any other therapeutic indication for its employment, to my apprehension, is altogether irrational, except in those cases in which we design merely to produce a nervous impression. I can easily conceive how hysteric women, to whom dram drinking may possibly be no novelty, and in whom certainly there is an undue disturbance of vital action, and especially of nervous function, may take alcohol in large quantities, and, as Prof. Hammond says, "crave it as the one thing needful." I can, by parity of reasoning, fully understand also why the drunkard greedily takes his morning dram, craving it as the one thing altogether needful. But is it so? Would it not be better to revolutionize the drunkard, to reform him, so that there should be no undue depression to create an artificial demand? Let us see to it, my brethren, that our teachings on the subject of the medicinal employment of alcohol shall be upon the side of safety. The power of intemperance is formidable enough without being made respectable by the bad therapeutics, and worse practice, of the medical profession.

I come now, in conclusion, to notice the remedy for this great evil. I have attempted to make out a diagnosis of the case; have given you, as fully as my time would allow, its clinical history; it only remains to prescribe.

My treatment would be largely prophylactic. But different doctors have different methods of treatment. The gifted Mrs. Jane Grey Swisshelm strongly pleads in a late article for the political enfranchisement of her sex; offering that as a specific. She says that women, by a tremendous ground swell, by tens of thousands, as a matter of absolute fact, have been squarely landed in the "stygian pool" of politics very much to their astonishment, and, as Horace Mann said, "are bobbling about like drowned chickens in the dead sea, unable either to sink or swim out." She says that the men having kindly invited them to the front can not face on their own act. But she can speak for herself better than I can speak for her. She says:

"Those men who have sanctioned her determination to take the front rank in the army of reformation can not well refuse to furnish her with weapons as good as those with which they hold their places in the war. It is bad generalship to send the advance guard of an attacking force armed with quill pop-guns and potato bullets against an enemy on the alert and well supplied with Minnie rifle and ball."

Now it may be that the crusade women, to apply Emerson's apt expression, "have builded better than they knew;" that the solution of this great problem really does rest with them; that the ballot is the efficient supplement of the prayer book. We have subjected the elective franchise to some wonderful experiments to test its stretching capacities in the last decade, and, like a lawyer's



conscience, it seems to be pretty elastic. Having accommodated nearly four million of negroes, it would likely hold all the women of the country without breaking. But leaving the solution of that problem to Mrs. Swisshelm, the inquiry occurs what are we to do individually?

I have already intimated that my practice would be prophylactic. The great want in respect to this question is the education of a correct public sentiment against it. We should refrain from the use of alcohol ourselves and refuse to sanction its use in others. We should teach our children to look upon its abuse as the great evil of all the years. And whenever we do that; whenever there can be three generations reared that shall absolutely be free from its use; whenever, in a word, we shall succeed so to educate mankind that they shall entirely forego the use of alcohol as a beverage, this whole question will settle itself to the entire satisfaction of every temperance person in the world.

Mr. Wendell Philipps says that the American people, from their peculiar admixture, springing as they do from so many nationalities, are of all people the most liable to fall victims to the vice of intemperance. If we are victims, let us also be heroes. If to the reproach of America, it may be said that her people are intemperate beyond those of any other nation almost, let it also be said to her glory, that among all the nations of the earth she is the only one that is steadfastly setting her face against this great curse, determined to trample it under foot.

And now, my friends, my hour has passed. I have detained you perhaps to little purpose. I am conscious that I have been able to give this great question only an imperfect consideration. If I shall have succeeded to stimulate thought; to induce you to look at this question as it confronts us to-day in this land in all its dreadful scope and power, I feel that I shall not have spoken in vain. Let us gird on our armor. The battle has already been joined. There can be no neutrals in this war. If we do not gather, we must scatter. The enemy is abroad. He has allies in our very camp. He shows no quarter. He strikes down with as relentless a blow as death itself. Our nearest friend may be his next victim. Eternal vigilance is alone the price of safety. For, before the grass shall grow or the flowers shall bloom again on these swelling prairies, it may be our sad lot to stand beside some grave, to which there shall come no illumining ray, and repeat those mournful words of Bryant:

"O glory of our race that so suddenly decays!  
 O crimson flush of morning that darkens as we gaze!  
 O breath of summer blossoms that on the restless air  
 Scatters a moment's sweetness, and flies we know not where!"



